



Directorate of
Intelligence

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Amended

Afghanistan Situation Report

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28 August 1984

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AFGHANISTAN SITUATION REPORT

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Insurgents have been effectively harassing Soviet and regime forces in the Panjsher Valley.

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The Soviets might calculate that greater military pressure on Pakistan would hamper the Afghan insurgency, but a number of military considerations tend to constrain Soviet adoption of the more dramatic options.

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Islamabad's concern about the Soviet military threat from Afghanistan has increased, but because the Pakistanis remain most concerned about India they have maintained only relatively modest defenses opposite Afghanistan.

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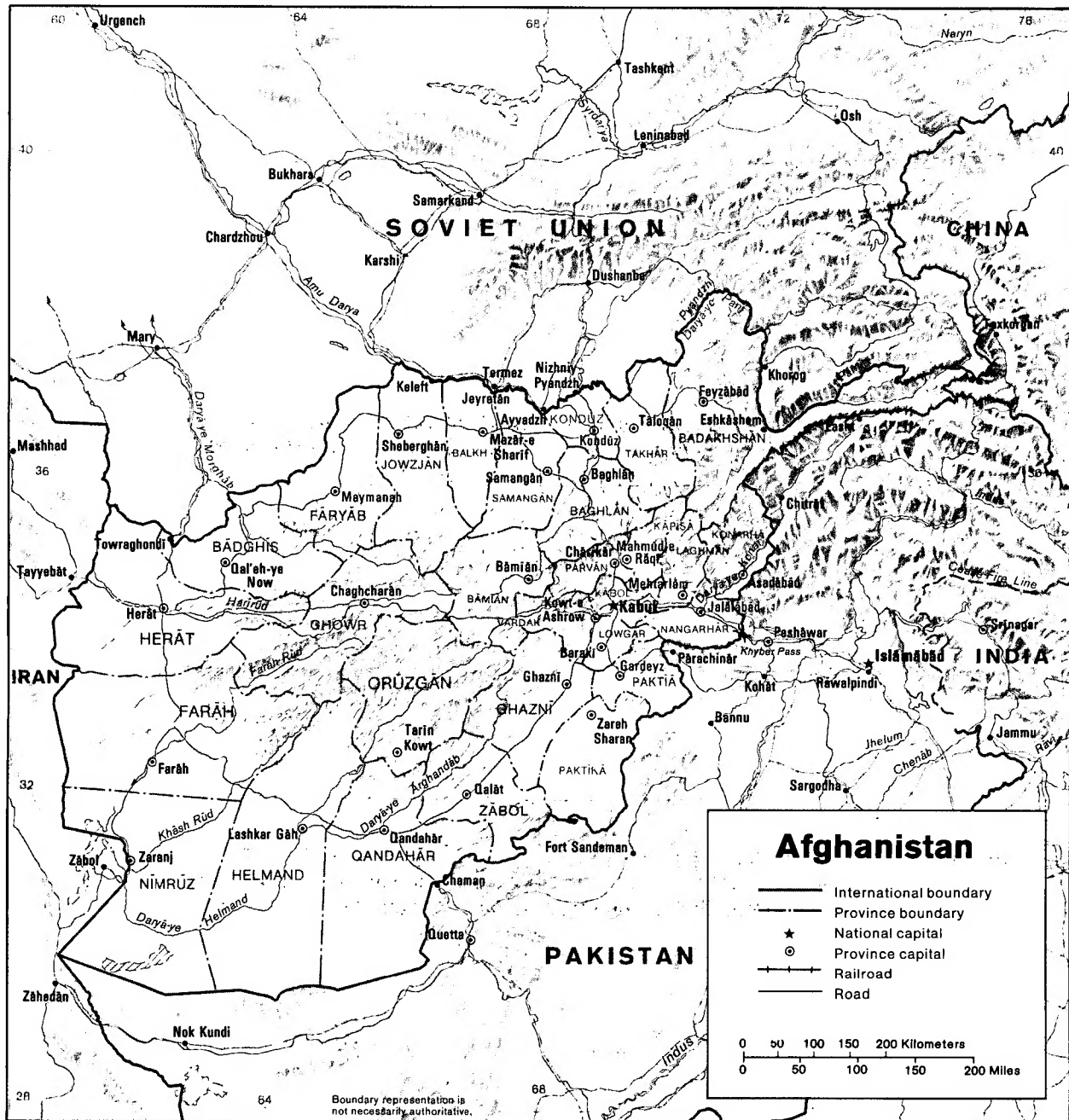
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INSURGENT RESURGENCE IN PANJSHER (C)

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US Embassy sources report insurgents in the Panjsher are carrying out hit-and-run raids and attempting to isolate Soviet and regime forces encamped in the upper and middle parts of the valley.

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Comment:

In the weeks ahead, Masood probably will continue to strengthen his position and step up harassment of Soviet and Afghan forces in the Panjsher Valley. The insurgents may plan to move gradually down the valley, attacking the weakest positions, and attempt to disrupt resupply efforts. (S NF)

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PERSPECTIVE

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PAKISTAN: SOVIET POLICY OPTIONS (U)

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Moscow is aware that the aid going through Pakistan for the Afghan resistance is an important factor sustaining the Afghan insurgency. To diminish Pakistani support, the Soviets at the moment have only limited military options against Pakistan. These are unlikely, by themselves, to change Islamabad's Afghan policy or reduce insurgent activity. More substantial and effective military pressure--such as larger scale ground attacks--would require a significant augmentation of Soviet forces and accompanying logistics preparations.

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Subversion

The Soviets could increase aid to a variety of ethnic and political groups opposed to Zia. They reportedly have longstanding ties to the Pakistan People's Party, which participates in the coalition Movement for the Restoration of Democracy, and opposes military rule in Pakistan. Soviet covert activity and propaganda may work within the MRD to incite disaffected students, lawyers, civil servants, and military officers against Zia. Aid to pro-Soviet Pakistani Communists could also be stepped up, but they are too weak to act alone. Past Soviet efforts along these lines have not paid off, and we doubt that more Soviet help would greatly increase the capabilities of these groups.

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Another option that has also been tried without much impact is fanning tensions between the Afghan refugees and Pakistani tribal groups over the issues of land, water, and employment. The Soviet and Afghan intelligence services have also long maintained links to Pakistani Pushtun and Baluch separatist groups, but their appeal for Pakistan's minorities has declined substantially since the Soviet invasion. These groups are too weak at present to threaten Zia's grip on power, but their potential for subversion deeply worries Islamabad.

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Sporadic or Sustained Strikes, Raids

The infrequency of air or artillery attacks on insurgent camps in Pakistan, on Pakistani villages, or on Pakistani border posts minimizes chances for a direct confrontation between Soviet or Afghan forces and Pakistani forces. Brief airstrikes near the border have enabled the Soviets to avoid an international outcry but have neither deterred Pakistan nor significantly damaged the insurgents. Artillery strikes would be limited by the range of the weapons, the need for resupply over difficult terrain, and the need to control and adjust firing across mountain areas.

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A major punitive strike, such as the bombing of Peshawar, or sustained raids would risk a major escalation of fighting. Raids by small air-assault teams, supported by helicopters and fighter-bombers, would risk strong opposition from Afghan insurgents and Pakistani paramilitary forces and have more damaging international repercussions because they would be harder to deny.

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Limited Strikes Against Pakistani Regular Forces

A raid on Pakistani regular forces would bring an international outcry and higher levels of support from the United States and China. The Soviets would also have to consider at least the risk of confrontation with the United States. The Pakistanis would react with both air and air defense forces, and the international political costs would be high.

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Occupation of Pakistani Territory

The limited military advantages likely to result from such raids might convince Soviet military planners that larger operations were necessary, perhaps to seize key tactical positions along major lines of communication east of the main operation to block Pakistani assistance to the insurgents. In preparation for such a campaign, Moscow would have to significantly augment its forces in Afghanistan. Cross-border attacks would be costly and difficult for the Soviets to sustain.

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Rugged terrain would neutralize much of the Soviet advantage in mobility and firepower. The movement of Soviet forces and supplies would be largely confined to narrow mountain roads, where they would be vulnerable to attack by insurgent forces or small defending Pakistani units. A large increase in troops or aircraft without an accompanying expansion of support facilities would only aggravate the logistics problems the Soviets currently have in Afghanistan. ☐

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Major Invasion

The military effort required for a major invasion of Pakistan would far exceed the effort needed for significant expansion of operations inside Afghanistan. An invasion would have very high political and military costs and would involve a substantial risk of Soviet-US military confrontation. ☐

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Weighing the Options

The severity of Moscow's recent threats and evidence of Soviet concern about losses and a general lack of progress suggest that the chances of cross-border strikes are greater now than at any time since the invasion. The Soviets might calculate that greater military pressure on the Afghan refugee camps or on Pakistani targets would at least make it more difficult for the insurgents to use Pakistan as a safehaven, cause Islamabad to ponder the level of assistance to the insurgents, and strengthen Pakistani elements skeptical of the wisdom of confronting Soviet might. ☐

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However, a number of purely military considerations--limited forces, logistic infrastructure, and unfavorable terrain--tend to constrain Soviet adoption of the more dramatic options such as large ground force raids against insurgent camps or attacks on Pakistani forces. Military bureaucratic constraints also probably exist. The Soviet military's approach to the war has been characterized by an attempt to do the minimum necessary, to adjust at the margins when required, and to keep the costs of the operation as low as possible. ☐

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The Soviets also risk that Pakistan would oppose new incursions with greater force and in retaliation provide even more aid to the Afghan insurgents. The United States, China, Saudi Arabia, and other nations might also increase economic and military assistance to Pakistan and the ☐

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Afghan insurgents. Greater Soviet military pressure could also have important international political repercussions, including a worsening of regional and Western fears about Soviet intentions, further erosion of Soviet standing in the Muslim world, and deterioration of Moscow's relationship with New Delhi. Moreover, given the resilience that insurgents have shown following Soviet sweeps inside Afghanistan, Soviet pressure on Pakistan would disrupt Afghan insurgent activity only temporarily.

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PERSPECTIVE**PAKISTAN'S DEFENSES OPPOSITE AFGHANISTAN**

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Islamabad's concern about the Soviet military threat from Afghanistan has increased, but because the Pakistanis remain most concerned about India they have maintained only relatively modest defenses opposite Afghanistan. The Pakistanis would have difficulty reacting quickly to Soviet or Afghan airstrikes or heliborne assault raids in the frontier region, and could not long resist large-scale Soviet or Afghan operations in their territory without significant US support. They could, however, inflict high casualties on Soviet or Afghan forces in ambushes or chance encounters--particularly if enemy forces operated for long periods in Pakistani territory.

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Senior Pakistani officials have told US officials they believe the Soviets intend to increase military pressure on Pakistan because of their growing frustration and higher combat losses in Afghanistan. The Pakistanis view the 13, 14, and 23 August bombing attacks in the Parachinar area and the cross-border artillery fire of 18, 19, and 21 August as deliberate attempts by the Soviets to press Islamabad before the UN-sponsored indirect talks on Afghanistan resumed in Geneva on 24 August.

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25X1**The Air Threat**

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Airstrikes against suspected insurgent camps and supply lines in Pakistani territory would be the most likely Soviet military actions to threaten Islamabad in the next year. As in the past, most of the air attacks probably would occur in the Parachinar area--an important area for insurgent infiltration into Afghanistan--or in remote regions of the

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Pakistan Tribal Areas along the border. If the Soviets were to mount frequent airstrikes into Pakistani territory, they probably would fly MIG-23 fighter patrols on the Afghan side of the border during the attacks to deter or respond to Pakistani aircraft. In the event of a major airstrike, Soviet MIG-23s probably would try to prevent a Pakistani response by flying patrols near Peshawar and Quetta airbases in Pakistan. [REDACTED]

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Pakistan's Air Defenses

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Pakistan would be unable to conduct an effective defense against Soviet or Afghan air incursions in the border region. The Soviets have some 12 SU-25 attack planes, 30 modern MIG-23 fighters and 30 SU-17 fighter-bombers at Bagram, Kabul, and Qandahar airbases in Afghanistan that could be used in cross-border air attacks. The Afghan Air Force has some 30 SU-17/22 fighter-bombers and 40 MIG-21 fighters at these airbases. The Pakistan Air Force has only some 40 F-6 fighters and 15 A-5 attack planes opposite Afghanistan even after being strengthened in the last year by the deployment of a second F-6 squadron to Quetta and the formation of a new A-5 squadron at Peshawar to supplement the F-6 squadron already there. [REDACTED]

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The Ground Threat

Soviet or Afghan ground incursions are likely to be small and short in duration, and the Soviets almost certainly would try to avoid a military confrontation with the Pakistan Army. The Soviets could mount quick heliborne raids into Pakistani territory adjacent to Afghanistan's border regions where resistance pressure on Afghan Army garrisons is greatest. Large-scale military operations in Pakistan's border regions in the next year would require the Soviets to significantly increase their forces and logistics in Afghanistan. Soviet and Afghan cross-border artillery fire aimed against Afghan insurgents using Pakistan as a sanctuary and staging area, however, probably will become more frequent in the next year. ☐

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Pakistan's Ground Defenses

Pakistan's transportation system could not support a rapid, large-scale major redeployment of forces from the Indian border, where most Pakistani units are located. Moreover, most of the Pakistan Army's ground combat units opposite Afghanistan--only four of Pakistan's 19 divisions and an infantry brigade--are deployed more than 20 kilometers behind the border to protect the major supply lines. The paramilitary Frontier Corps, which lacks heavy weapons and has only limited mobility, has primary responsibility for defending the border with Afghanistan.

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☐ the Corps has been augmented by a few Pakistan Army battalions in defensive positions--including bunkers


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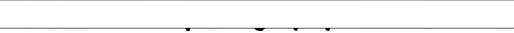

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and artillery emplacements--at strategic border crossings. 

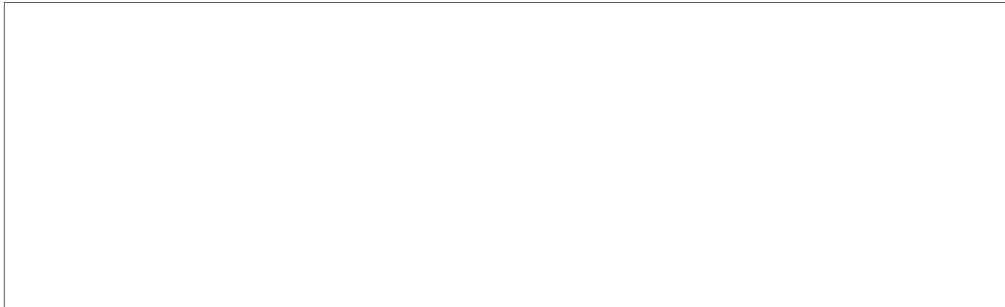
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 additional forward defensive positions have been prepared near major border crossings that could be manned in case of intensified Soviet or Afghan military pressure on Pakistan. 


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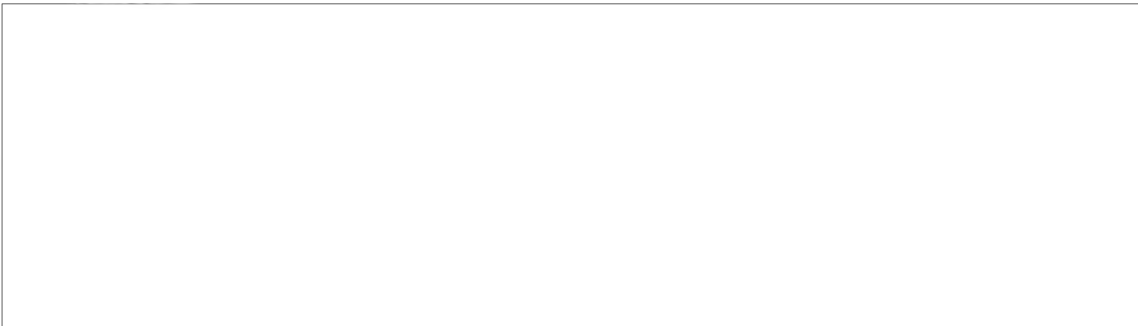


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8 Islamabad regards the Parachinar salient in the Kurram Agency and the Tribal Areas between Miram Shah and Wana as the most vulnerable area to Soviet attack, according to a senior Pakistani officer. The Pakistanis believe this area is more suitable for maneuvering forces than elsewhere along the border, and that the Pakistan Army could not rapidly reinforce there because the road network is particularly bad. Most of the other major attack routes--including the Arandu, Khyber, and Khojak Passes--could be more easily defended because the attacking forces would be channelled through narrow passes and vulnerable to Pakistani counterattacks. 

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Outlook



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The Pakistanis, who have acted with restraint toward past border incidents, are reluctant to risk a major military confrontation with the

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The Pakistanis probably will continue to act with restraint to air and ground incursions from Afghanistan. Pakistani Frontier Corps and Army units would fire on Soviet or Afghan aircraft or ground forces attacking near their positions in the frontier region, but we judge that Islamabad would keep Army units deployed principally in defensive positions away from the border both to avoid a major battle and to guard against deep incursions. The Pakistan Air Force continues to adhere to rules of engagement that prohibit firing on intruding aircraft less than 10 kilometers inside the border. President Zia would come under greater pressure to defend against Soviet or Afghan incursions if they became more frequent and systematic, or to make the political concessions necessary to reduce the Soviet threat in the border region.

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Implications for the US

The Pakistanis are using the latest cross-border incidents to press the United States for new arms deals and accelerated delivery of advanced weapons.

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